

Joint Statement for the 32nd U.S.-Portugal Standing Bilateral Commission

April 17, 2013 – Washington, D.C.

The U.S. - Portugal Standing Bilateral Commission held its 32nd Session on April 17th, in Washington, to review progress on political, defense, economic, law enforcement and scientific bilateral cooperation in recent months. Commission members recognized the close ties between the two countries and pledged to explore and foster further opportunities for cooperation.

The Portuguese delegation presented its condolences and solidarity with the United States regarding the shameful and cowardly attacks that targeted the Boston Marathon on April 15th.

The Commission highlighted the exemplary cooperation between the two parties in the fight against terrorism, welcoming Portugal's recent ratification of the bilateral Terrorism Screening Information Exchange Agreement and the ongoing implementation of the bilateral Preventing and Combating Crime Agreement.

The Commission examined with great detail the follow-up of the U.S. decision to sharply reduce after September 2014 its military presence at the Portuguese Lajes Airbase regulated by the 1995 Agreement on Cooperation and Defense (ACD). The Portuguese Delegation emphasized the need to agree as soon as possible on a broad plan to mitigate the political, strategic, labor and economic consequences of that decision, including: the adjustment of the Technical Agreement of the ACD to the new model of the U.S. presence at Lajes after 2014; the significant enhancement of the defense bilateral cooperation in accordance with the strategic priorities of both countries for the next decades; the adoption of criteria in the process of reduction of the Portuguese workforce employed by the American detachment at Lajes that take advantage of the stronger social protection mechanisms in place; the active promotion by both parties of commercial and other investments in Terceira that could result in job creation and in finding alternative uses for some of Lajes existing infrastructure; and a roadmap for the implementation of modifications to Lajes infrastructure utilized by the U.S. Air Force in accordance with the terms of the Agreement, including the demolition of the buildings that will have no future use after 2014.

The Commission also addressed the following issues:

- The results of the High Level Defense Policy Talks held in Washington on April 16th, including the development of a roadmap for several bilateral and trilateral cooperation projects, including, among others, expanded special operations engagement and naval cooperation.

- The importance of bilateral and international coordination on issues relating to global security and stability, including the present situations in Afghanistan, Syria, Mali and Guinea-Bissau. The parties noted their similar assessments of these situations.
- The current global financial and economic situation, particularly in Portugal, the Euro Zone and the United States. In this framework, the U.S. reiterated its full support of Portugal's efforts in the implementation of the reform program under the Memorandum of Understanding with the IMF and European institutions.
- The recent increases in bilateral trade and the goal of reinforcing bilateral investment.
- The great expectations and strong support for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which, if successful, could increase U.S. - EU trade and investment.
- The goal of concluding by the end of the year a bilateral agreement to improve international tax compliance and to implement the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act.
- The challenges of enhancing a sustained bilateral cooperation in the Azores, including on mechanisms to examine proposals presented by the Regional Government of the Azores.
- The commitment of both parties to promote some of the ideas presented by the "Business Executives for National Security" February mission to the Azores. The Portuguese delegation expressed its gratitude for the work done by BENS, noting the usefulness of using such structures to disseminate in the United States information regarding investment opportunities in the Azores.
- The goal of expanding homeland security and law enforcement cooperation.
- The implementation of the Science, Technology, Energy and Environment Committee Action Plan and the continuation of consultations between Portugal's Science and Technology Foundation and the U.S. National Science Foundation regarding the establishment of parallel grant review mechanisms and between Portugal's Ocean and Air Institute and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to enhance cooperation on maritime affairs.
- The success of the International Partnerships Program between Portugal and American universities and the recent authorization by the Portuguese Government for the renewal of contracts with three U.S. universities in the amount of €54 million.
- The activities of the Luso-American Development Foundation.
- The 2011 Standing Bilateral Commission reforms, including the goal of improving the effectiveness of the Azores and the Trade and Investment committees.

The Commission will hold its 33rd meeting in Portugal next fall.